

"All the Buddhas and Patriarchs, without exception, certify that they have taken refuge where the three times, past, present and future, cease, where the ten thousand things come together in silence."

When we sit on the highest peak, we can no longer see the mountain. There is nothing left to see but the empty sky. We *are* the mountain, we *are* time itself. And because we *are* time, we shine with the brilliant light of time, right now, without even being aware of it. In this limitless space, there is no longer any 'me', no longer any separation. All is One. This is the zazen of the Buddhas and Patriarchs.

When the self is no longer there to go back and forth between the three times, there is only Presence and the three times are simply what we *are*. This Presence is silence, without before or after, the place where the ten thousand things appear-disappear. This is the only refuge where we know what the truth of ourselves is, emptiness empty of emptiness. It is the refuge which is the Three Treasures. Zazen is Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. It's in this way that, through our very breath and our awareness of our own presence, zazen becomes perfect Wisdom.

Master Hyakujo said to his monks:

"Fearing that none of you would understand, the Buddhas gave the name of the Way, of Tao, to the truth. But, please, do not create any concept of this word. As the saying goes: "When the fish is caught, we forget the net". When body and mind achieve spontaneity, the Way is accomplished and universal Mind is revealed."

Let's not imagine what the words mean. Let's not conceptualise what awakening might be. Let's not attribute a substance to emptiness. Perfect spontaneity is the silence in which the ten thousand things play, appearing and disappearing ceaselessly. A game of cosmic hide-and-seek in which the whole universe appears in the three times, at one and the same time - Presence which welcomes everything that arises and immediately reabsorbs it. Inconceivable freedom is to know oneself as this Presence-Emptiness, the place where the three times cease.

"Straight ahead," continues Master Wanshi, "not separated by the smallest atom, our naturally enlightened buddha-mind merges with the original source. When we recognise and fully realise this, our mind speaks to itself and responds naturally to situations and circumstances. The dharmas (phenomena) shine forth and all beings perceive their brilliance. We understand then that all things arise from ourselves and that the hundreds of thousands of situations and circumstances are not in opposition to us. The whole body, from head to toe, melts into this harmonious concurrence."

Seated on the highest of the peaks, like a mountain, there is nothing to see but the vast empty sky. There is just light illuminating itself. The ten thousand things and the innumerable existences are dissolved in this light.

"And that," said Master Dogen, "is simply because the ten thousand things and the innumerable existences are themselves light."

Ta Mei said this to his monks in the temple hall:

"You must all turn your minds around and reach the root. Do not pursue the branches, for if you reach the root, the ends of the branches will be reached spontaneously. If you want to know the root, know your own mind. The source of your mind is the whole universe."
